

**INSIGHTS ON HOW PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT FEEL TREATED DIFFERENTLY OR EXCLUDED IN BELGIUM**  
*Large-scale narrative research using a storytelling approach of @SenseMaker<sup>1</sup>.*

People of African Descent are crucial actors in dismantling racism in Belgium. Sankaa's narrative large-scale research 'racism unravelled'<sup>2</sup>, based on more than 400 lived experiences, confirmed this. This research aimed to collect insights into how people of African descent feel treated differently or excluded in Belgium.

The results from this research verify that both implicit as well as explicit racism coexists in Belgium and they mutually reinforce one another. Feelings of anger, powerlessness, paralysis and sadness are prominent among storytellers. Storytellers are also uncertain and sceptical as to where and whether it is worthwhile filing a complaint. The combination of every day and often subtle forms of micro-aggression coupled with more systemic exclusionary mechanisms have had an impact not only on how they view themselves but to a large extent on how they view society. Many have lost their sense of belonging, making them feel less connected to the society they belong to. This detached feeling affects how much trust they place in the official bodies that are actually there for them or can be there for them, and that can support them.

As a coping mechanism, people of African Descent who experience racism try to aim at what they themselves have in control. When seeking help or support they mainly knock on the door of people in their own circles, compared to police and judiciary systems. Hence policymakers should strive to better reflect diversity in society, dismantle the eurocentrism perception in education and other sectors and most importantly expand the knowledge about this group by NOT only listening to their voices but also actively involving them.

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<sup>1</sup> Irene Guijt, Maria Veronica Gottret, Anna Hanchar, Steff Deprez, Rita Muckenhirn, 2022, The Learning Power of Listening: Practical guidance for using SenseMaker, p 17-19 <https://www.voicesthatcount.net>

<sup>2</sup> Sankaa vzw. (2022, september). Racisme Ontrafeld. Een inkijk in hoe personen met Afrikaanse roots in België zich anders behandeld of uitgesloten voelen. <https://sankaa.be/projecten/racisme-ontrafeld-eindrapport/>